

Giving an Oral Presentation

A - Preparation

1. What's the purpose of an oral presentation generally, and for this assignment?

Generally:

- To provide a clear overview of a topic within a given time frame (this can be to inform or persuade the audience – note the difference and identify which is relevant for your assignment)
- To make sure the audience understands and remembers the most important information
- To provide an opportunity for the audience to get feedback on the topic to clarify their understanding

For this assignment:

- Read every word of the assignment instructions given to you by your lecturer or tutor closely
- Identify the main purpose of the presentation, the suggested format, the time allocated, and any other requirements
- Make sure you follow these instructions closely, and ask the lecturer or tutor to clarify any unclear points well before the day of the presentation

2. How do I select and organize the content of a presentation effectively?

- Remember that you have to be selective about what you present; you can't present everything. Avoid unnecessary detail
- Remember that you are telling a story. You need to select key points and arrange them in a way to make your story clear for the audience
- Use a method to remind the audience of the main point of your presentation and use it frequently throughout the speech

3. What are the keys to making successful audio-visual slides?

- Remember that audio-visual slides do not tell the story for you. You are the story-teller and the slides help to make your story clear. Nothing more.
- Remember that your audience will find it difficult to read and remember more than a few words and other details on each slide you present. So choose them carefully.
- A typical presentation of around 20 minutes should contain only 8 to 10 slides. No more.

B - Delivery

4. How do I make sure that everything I have prepared doesn't slip out of my mind on the day?

- The most important thing is to make sure you remember the structure of your presentation and its main points.
- Present naturally, without reading, using your own language. You will engage the audience's this way.
- Do not attempt to remember every detail. You will sound mechanical and like a robot, and your audience will lose interest quickly.
- Use small palm cards to remind you of important facts or the sequence of ideas in case you forget them, but do not read your entire speech from them. Reading directly guarantees that the audience will switch off.
- Speak more slowly than you normally would during everyday conversation. You will get people's attention this way. Pausing to gather your thoughts or to signal a new section of your presentation is OK.
- Practice your presentation at least twice before the day and modify it where necessary in the same way that you might edit and proofread a written assignment. Pay close attention to your timing.

5. I've prepared well, I know what to say but on the day I panic. What can I do?

- Monitor your breathing. Try to make sure your breaths are slow, deep and steady rather than rapid and short.
- Exercise moderately on the day before the session to clear your head.
- Have some water handy.
- Arrive at the room you are going to present in at least 10 minutes before the beginning of class to get familiar with it, adjust the lighting and check the AV equipment for problems.

6. How can I handle audience questions effectively to show that I know what I am talking about?

- Listen carefully to questions, ask for clarification where necessary ("So, what you're asking is whether ...") and pause before answering to give yourself time to think. You will also appear knowledgeable to your audience this way.
- Check that the person asking the question has understood your answer ("Does that answer your question?") before moving on.
- Prepare a few questions to ask the audience yourself to give you a bit of control over the question-and-answer session.

Further Reading

UTS:HELPS Website: www.ssu.uts.edu.au/helps/

Comcoach Website: www.ruf.rice.edu/~comcoach

TED Website (examples of accomplished speakers): www.ted.com